

JOHN VII PALAEOLOGUS AND THE IVORY PYXIS AT DUMBARTON OAKS

NICOLAS OIKONOMIDES

THERE is a Byzantine ivory pyxis, now in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, which appears to commemorate a historical event. It is round and quite small, 3 cm. high and 4.2 cm. in diameter. Around the body the surface is carved in a frieze, on which no less than sixteen human beings are represented (fig. 1).¹

Two imperial families in frontal ceremonial pose are depicted as the central figures of the composition. From left to right we see:

a. An emperor with a long, forked beard, wearing the crown and the loros and holding the cruciform scepter and the *akakia*. Close to his head, on his right, is an inscription in raised letters indicating his name: $\overline{\Omega}$, that is, Ἰω(άννης) .

b. A child-emperor, also wearing the crown and the loros and holding the cruciform scepter and the *akakia*. Above his head is an inscription in raised letters with his name: ΑΝΔΡ , that is, Ἀνδρ(όνικος) .

c. An empress, wearing the crown and probably holding a scepter, part of which is now broken and lost. Close to her head, on her left, is an inscription in raised letters: ΕΡ , that is, Εἰρ(ήνη) . It should be observed that the rectangle on which this inscription is carved, together with the initial of the following emperor, is not as thick as the rest of the carvings.

d. An emperor with a forked beard longer than that of the first emperor (perhaps an indication that he is older?), wearing the crown and the loros and holding the cruciform scepter and the *akakia*. Close to his head, on his right, the letter M is inscribed, indicating that his name begins with this initial.

e. A second child-emperor, taller—and presumably older—than the child named Andronicus; he also wears the crown and the loros and holds the cruciform scepter and the *akakia*. Above his head is a rectangle, obvi-

ously intended to contain an inscription with his name (and, perhaps, the name of the empress next to him). It has been purposely left blank, so we have no indication as to the name of the young emperor.

f. An empress, wearing a crown and holding a noncruciform scepter. No inscription.

To the left of the first emperor, the one inscribed John, is a kneeling youth in profile, offering him the model of a city (or a fortress). The space below this model is filled with a peacock in profile, also looking toward the Emperor John. In the rest of the frieze musicians and dancers are represented: a drummer, a flutist, a lyre player, a trumpeter, a lute player, another trumpeter, a syrinx(?) player, and two female dancers.

It is obvious that we are looking at the representation of two imperial families: two imperial couples, each with one son already elevated to the throne in spite of his tender age. In the first family, the emperor is called John, his wife Irene, and their offspring Andronicus. In the second family, we know only that the father's name begins with the letter M (Manuel, or Matthew, or Michael?). The model of the city is offered to the Emperor John—or, conceivably, to the six emperors altogether—and one has the impression that this significant act, the offering of the city, is the reason for the joyous festivities shown on the frieze.

Who are the emperors represented on this pyxis? Two answers have been given, both of which link our pyxis to the Cantacuzenus family, for the obvious reason that John VI Cantacuzenus' wife was named Irene. Grabar identified the emperors of the first group as John VI Cantacuzenus, his grandson Andronicus (IV) Palaeologus, and his wife Irene, and those of the second group as John V Palaeologus, another son of his, and his wife Helen Cantacuzene; and he thought that the ivory was carved in two different stages between 1348 and 1352.² This complicated theory has

¹ K. Weitzmann, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*. III, *Ivories and Steatites* (Washington, D.C., 1972), 77–82, no. 31 and pls. LII, LIII; bibliography p. 82.

² A. Grabar, "Une pyxide en ivoire à Dumbarton Oaks. Quelques notes sur l'art profane pendant les derniers siècles de l'Empire byzan-

to be discarded for many reasons, but most of all because, as Weitzmann has correctly pointed out, the second emperor ought to have a name starting with the letter M and, consequently, cannot be John V Palaeologus. Weitzmann accepted Grabar's identification of the first imperial family, and suggested that in the second group one should see Matthew Cantacuzenus with his wife Irene Palaeologina and their son John; he related the whole scene to the coronation of Matthew, which took place in Blachernae in 1355 (*leg.* February 1354), and believed that the model offered to the emperor represents the city of Constantinople or the palace of Blachernae.³

Yet, this interpretation also presents major difficulties. Why, if the whole was conceived to commemorate Matthew's coronation in 1354, should the model of the city be offered to the Emperor John (who reigned over it from 1347 to 1354)? What could be the reason for not adding the inscription with the names of the second child-emperor and his mother?⁴ And, more important, if one accepts the above identifications one has also to suppose that Matthew Cantacuzenus' first son, John, was crowned emperor together with his father in February 1354, or, at least, that he was crowned sometime between February 1354 and November of the same year (abdication of John VI Cantacuzenus). But this was certainly not the case, because:

1. In his *Memoirs*, John VI Cantacuzenus clearly states that Matthew alone was crowned in February 1354; that he was given a part of the Empire to rule independently for life as emperor but that, at his death, this territory would not pass to his heir but would revert to John V, or, if he were dead, to

Andronicus IV; and that after February 1354, Matthew's name was added to the imperial acclamations in Constantinople. In all these critical passages, John Cantacuzenus the Younger, Matthew's son, is not even mentioned, presumably because he was not emperor.⁵

2. In these same *Memoirs*, Cantacuzenus stresses that John V Palaeologus, after forcing Matthew to abdicate in 1357, elevated the latter's sons, John and Demetrius, to the "most distinguished dignities of the Romans," that is, he made them despot and sebastocrator respectively.⁶ But if John Cantacuzenus the Younger had already been an emperor, this "promotion" would in fact be a demotion that could not pass unnoticed.

3. We have the text of the ex-emperor Matthew's oath of allegiance to John V and Andronicus IV Palaeologi in 1357, as it was resworn before the Patriarch Philotheos.⁷ John Cantacuzenus the Younger is not mentioned in this text, and this omission would have been unthinkable if John had previously received the imperial dignity. It should be noted that in Matthew's oath John VI Cantacuzenus *is* mentioned as having confirmed his abdication, although he had become a monk three years earlier.

Thus, I conclude that the second child represented with full imperial insignia on this pyxis cannot be John Cantacuzenus the Younger. Consequently, the proposed identifications, dating, and interpretation of the ivory have to be revised.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a different set of identifications that will redate our pyxis to half a century later.⁸ I suggest that the emperors represented are John VII Palaeologus, his wife Irene, and their son Andronicus (V), and Manuel II Palaeologus, his wife Helen, and their son John VIII; and

tin," *DOP*, 14 (1960), 121-46; repr. in *idem*, *L'art de la fin de l'antiquité et du moyen-âge*, I (Paris, 1968), 229-49.

³ Weitzmann, *op. cit.*, 79. Weitzmann's chronological data have been slightly rectified by I. Spatharakis, "The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art," *BA Besch*, 49 (1974), 204, who followed the chronology of the Cantacuzenus family established by D. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100-1460*, DOS, XI (Washington, D.C., 1968), 114.

⁴ Spatharakis, *loc. cit.*, in his effort to explain this lack of inscription, supposes that the pyxis was left unfinished because, in the meantime, John VI Cantacuzenus was overthrown in November 1354. This is possible but not likely.

⁵ *Ioannis Cantacuzeni ex imperatoris Historiarum Libri IV*, ed. L. Schopen, III, Bonn ed. (1832), 269-70, 280-81.

⁶ Nicol, *op. cit.*, 118, 157. Cf. *Ioannis Cantacuzeni*, 358: ἡξίωσε τῶν ἐπιφανεστῶτων παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις, δεσπότην μὲν τὸν Ἰωάννην ἀποδείξας... καὶ κοινωήσας... τραπεζίης.

⁷ F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, I (Vienna, 1860), 448-50.

⁸ I will not take into consideration here John II Comnenus and John III Vatatzes,

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that the pyxis was made to commemorate the installation of John VII as emperor in Thessalonica by the end of 1403 or the beginning of 1404.

The career of John VII, of the first imperial family, is fairly well known.⁹ Son of the turbulent Andronicus IV, he persisted in claiming the Byzantine throne and, aided by the Genoese, managed to occupy Constantinople on 14 April 1390, only to be expelled five months later (17 September) by his uncle Manuel II.¹⁰ In 1399, thanks to the intervention of Marshall Boucicaut, John VII was finally reconciled with Manuel II, who adopted him¹¹ and entrusted him with the defense of Constantinople while he traveled in western Europe, seeking military aid against the Ottomans. Profiting from the Ottoman defeat at Ankara in 1402, John VII in 1403 concluded the treaty by which Sultan Bayazid's son, Süleyman çelebi, returned the city of Thessalonica to Byzantium, together with substantial territories in Macedonia and Thrace.¹² John VII quietly turned over his power to Manuel II when the latter returned to Constantinople in June 1403, and, after a short quarrel (see *infra*, p. 334), John VII and his family took possession at the end of 1403 or the beginning of 1404 of Thessalonica,

whose wives were called Irene; neither of them ever had a son and coemperor named Andronicus, or a coemperor whose name began with the letter M.

⁹ F. Dölger, "Johannes VII., Kaiser der Rhomäer 1390–1408," *BZ*, 31 (1931), 21–36; P. Wirth, "Zum Geschichtsbild Kaiser Johannes VII. Palaiologos," *Byzantion*, 35 (1965), 592–600; J. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), *passim*.

¹⁰ It seems that at this time John VII had adopted his father's name, Andronicus, and that is how he was acclaimed by his own soldiers and referred to by his Genoese friends. See E. Zachariadou, "John VII (alias Andronicus) Palaeologus," *DOP*, 31 (1977), 339–42.

¹¹ Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca*, II (1862), 359–60: ἡνώθησαν ὡς περ πατήρ καὶ υἱός. This adoption is recorded in several archival documents of the first two decades of the fifteenth century: cf. N. Oikonomides, *Actes de Dionysiou* (Paris, 1968), 90; M. Braun, *Lebensbeschreibung des Despoten Stefan Lazarević* (Wiesbaden, 1956), 22: "wie seinem Vater."

¹² G. Dennis, "The Byzantine-Turkish Treaty of 1403," *OCP*, 33 (1967), 72–88; cf. Barker, *op. cit.*, 225 and note 43.

where he ruled as "emperor of Thessaly" until his death (23 September 1408)¹³ while Manuel II reigned in Constantinople.

Sometime before 1397, maybe already in 1390, John VII married a daughter of Francesco II Gattilusi, Lord of Lesbos.¹⁴ Her first name was undoubtedly Εἰρήνη, Irene; it is attested in a manuscript colophon, written in Thessalonica in August 1404,¹⁵ as well as in a chrysobull issued by John VII himself in February 1407.¹⁶ After her husband's death in 1408 she took the veil and, according to the Byzantine habit, changed her name to one beginning with the same initial, Εὐγενία; she is mentioned by this monastic name in a prayer written between the years 1427 and 1439,¹⁷ as well as in the chronicle recording her death on 1 January 1440.¹⁸

¹³ The year of John's death (6917 = 1408/9) is confirmed by the Bulgarian chronicle published by J. Bogdan, "Ein Beitrag zur bulgarischen und serbischen Geschichtschreibung," *ASP*, 13 (1891), 543, esp. 534 and note 1. Before dying, John VII made his profession as a monk and changed his name to Joseph (not Joasaph, as is sometimes assumed: *Actes de Dionysiou*, 116).

¹⁴ Several problems surround John VII's marriage and its date. See G. Dennis, "An Unknown Byzantine Emperor, Andronicus V Palaeologus," *JÖBG*, 16 (1967), 179; N. Oikonomides, *Σημείωμα γὰρ τὸν Ἀνδρόνικο Ε' Παλαιό, λόγο, in Θησαυρίσματα*, 5 (1968), 28–31; Barker, *op. cit.*, 462f.

¹⁵ Sp. Lampros, *Κατάλογος τῶν ἐν ταῖς βιβλιοθήκαις τοῦ Ἀγίου Ὁρους ἑλληνικῶν κωδίκων*, I (Cambridge, 1895), 181, cod. 2104 (Esphigmenou 91): μηνὶ Αὐγούστῳ, ἡνδικτιῶνος ιβ', ς' ἡμέρας, ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων ἡμῶν βασιλέων Ἰωάννου καὶ Εἰρήνης τῶν Παλαιολόγων.

¹⁶ W. Regel, *Χρυσόβουλλα καὶ γράμματα τῆς ... μονῆς τοῦ Βατοπεδίου* (St. Petersburg, 1898), 45; and J. Bompiaire, *Actes de Xéropotamou* (Paris, 1964), 207: τῆς ἐρασμιωτάτης μοι αὐγούστης κυρᾶς Εἰρήνης.

¹⁷ J. Goar, *Εὐχολόγιον* (Paris, 1647), 81; F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (Oxford, 1896), 552: ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας, κράτους, νίκης καὶ διαμονῆς τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων καὶ φιλοχρίστων βασιλέων ἡμῶν, τῆς εὐσεβεστάτης καὶ φιλοχρίστου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Ὑπομονῆς μοναχῆς [name in religion of Helen, widow of Manuel II], τῆς εὐσεβεστάτης καὶ φιλοχρίστου δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Εὐγενίας μοναχῆς [name in religion of Irene, widow of John VII], τῶν εὐσεβεστάτων καὶ φιλοχρίστων βασιλέων ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου καὶ Μαρίας [John VIII's third wife; they married in September 1427, and she died on 17 December 1439].

¹⁸ *Georgios Sphrantzes, Memorii*, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest, 1966), 62, esp. 332: καὶ τῇ αἷ Ἰαννουαρίου μηνὸς τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἔτους [i.e., 1439/40]

The couple were reputed to have died childless. This is only partly true because it is now established that they did have a son named Andronicus (after his paternal grandfather), who had been elevated to the rank of coemperor and who died at the age of seven, before his parents. This is proved by two texts discovered and published by Dennis.¹⁹ The first and more eloquent one is a "Monody on the death of the seven-year-old Emperor kyr Andronicus Palaeologus, son of kyr John, the nephew of the Emperor kyr Manuel."²⁰ The prosopographical data of the title, partly confirmed by phrases from the text of the Monody, are very clear. Moreover, from the text we learn that Andronicus' parents were both alive, that they were emperors and "regarded him gladly as their successor."²¹ From another passage we may also deduce that Andronicus had arrived in the city, in which the anonymous author of the Monody dwelt, shortly before his death: "Scarcely did we behold this imperial child, when suddenly he departed from our midst."²²

The second text published by Dennis is a letter of consolation to an emperor (not named); its author might be a patriarch or, more probably, a metropolitan of Thessalonica. Comparison of internal evidence shows that this letter most probably refers to the same event: it is written for the death of an emperor's young son, who was also an emperor and was expected to succeed to the

throne, and who had probably lived in Thessalonica.²³

We know nothing more about Andronicus' dates. If the consolatory letter really refers to *his* death, we may assume that he died in Thessalonica during his father's reign there (end of 1403/beginning of 1404–1408). This is not certain, although very probable.²⁴ The study of our pyxis will provide more evidence in favor of this dating.

The second imperial family on our pyxis is much better known: the Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425) with his wife Helen Dragaš, whom he married in 1392, and their first son John (VIII), born probably in December 1392.²⁵ The only problem that arises is related to the date of John VIII's coronation as coemperor. Dölger, followed on this point by many scholars, has established that John VIII was crowned on 19 January 1421.²⁶ But there are many uncertainties²⁷ concerning what exactly happened on 19 January 1421: was it a coronation or a marriage? The Greek verb *στέφω* means both. If it was a coronation, was it the first one for John VIII, or was this the moment when his father, Manuel II, bestowed upon him the dignity of *basileus autokrator*?

Be that as it may, it seems to me that John VIII was undoubtedly a coemperor long before 1421, for the following reasons:

1. Venetian documents refer to him as emperor before that date.²⁸ 2. In an oration

ἀπέθανεν ἡ δέσποινα Εὐγενία, ἡ τοῦ Γατελιούζη θυγάτηρ. This text of Sphrantzes is at the origin of a wide-spread misunderstanding that John VII's wife was called Eugenia. See Oikonomides, *Σημείωμα*, 28 note 15.

¹⁹ Dennis, "An Unknown Byzantine Emperor," 175–87. It could be added here that S. Runciman, "Lucas Notaras, γαμβρός τοῦ βασιλέως," in *Polychronion, Festschrift Franz Dölger* (Heidelberg, 1966), 447–49, supposes that John VII also had a daughter, who later married Lucas Notaras. Cf. A. Bakalopoulos, in *BZ*, 52 (1959), 15–16.

²⁰ Dennis, "An Unknown Byzantine Emperor," 181: Μονωδία ἐπὶ τῇ τελευτῇ κυροῦ Ἀνδρονίκου βασιλέως τοῦ Παλαιολόγου, υἱοῦ τοῦ κυροῦ Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἀνεψιοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως κυροῦ Μανουήλ, ἑπτὰ ἔτους ὄντος.

²¹ *Ibid.*: οἱ εὐσεβέστατοι καὶ ἅγιοι βασιλεῖς καὶ σοὺ γεννήτορες. . . διάδοχον θαρροῦντες ἔχειν.

²² *Ibid.*: . . . φεῦ, τῆς ἡμῶν ἀθλιότητος, ὅτι τε ἅμα εἶδομεν τὸν πανευκλέεστατον βασιλικὸν κλάδον καὶ παρευθὺς ἐκ μέσου γέγονεν.

²³ As Dennis, *ibid.*, 176–77, pointed out, a significant reference to St. Demetrius is made in the letter, indicating that the author might be the Metropolitan Gabriel of Thessalonica (1397–1416/19), whose name also seems to be written, with very faint letters, at the end of the consolatory letter.

²⁴ In my article in *Θησαυρίσματα* (*supra*, note 14), I proposed that the Emperor Andronicus mentioned by various sources in Constantinople in 1390 was John VII's son, whose existence was discovered by Dennis, but I was wrong; see *supra*, note 10. Dennis, "An Unknown Byzantine Emperor," 176–77, was most probably correct when stating that Andronicus V died in Thessalonica.

²⁵ Barker, *op. cit.* (note 9 *supra*), 104 note 28.

²⁶ F. Dölger, "Die Krönung Johannes VIII. zum Mitkaiser," *BZ*, 36 (1936), 318–19.

²⁷ H.-G. Beck, in *BZ*, 69 (1976), 184.

²⁸ List of the documents in Barker, *op. cit.*, 347 note 91. See also the letter that Constantine Raoul addressed to King Ferdinand of Aragon

addressed by John Chortasmenos to Manuel II not later than 1415 it is clearly stated that John VIII was already a coemperor.²⁹ 3. A short chronicle, usually misinterpreted, seems to assert that John VIII was crowned emperor before John VII's death, that is, before September 1408.³⁰ 4. More importantly, we have the frontispiece miniature (fig. 2) of the luxurious manuscript that Manuel Chrysoloras presented, as a gift of Manuel II Palaeologus, to the Parisian Abbey of Saint Denis in 1408 (now in the Louvre, Ivoires, cod. A 53, fol. 2). In this miniature, which is a real family portrait,³¹ John VIII, still a child, is wearing the full imperial costume and insignia and is qualified as "coemperor" (πιστός βασιλεύς but not *autokrator*) in the accompanying inscription. He is represented together with his father (the βασιλεύς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Manuel), his mother (the αὐγούστα καὶ αὐτοκρατόρισσα Helen), and his two younger brothers, the despot Theodore and Andronicus, who is called αὐθεντόπουλος in the inscription because no official title had yet been bestowed on him (he was to become a despot in 1408).

in March 1416: "imperator Calojohannes"; S. Cirac-Estopañan, *Bizancio y España. La Unión, Manuel II Paleologo y sus recuerdos en España* (Barcelona, 1952), 123.

²⁹ H. Hunger, *Johannes Chortasmenos* (Vienna, 1969), 222f.

³⁰ P. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, I (Vienna, 1975), 185, par. 31; cf. II (1977), 410–11. This short chronicle, in spite of the incongruous chronological data that it contains (the 10th indiction [1402 or 1417] does not correspond to the year 6924 [1416]), affirms that Manuel II crowned (στέφει εἰς βασιλέα) his son John [VIII] ἐν τῷ ζῶντι; the pronoun του (he) must refer to the Emperor "Andronicus" (i.e., John VII; cf. *supra*, p. 331), whose death is mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph. Consequently, the phrase should be understood as "while he [John VII] was still alive," and the coronation of John VIII should be placed before September 1408. Needless to say, the additions proposed by the editors after του are no longer necessary.

³¹ See the recent and detailed study of this miniature by K. Wessel, "Manuel II. Palaiologos und seine Familie. Zur Miniatur des Cod. Ivoires A 53 des Louvre," *Beiträge zur Kunst des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Hans Wenzel zum 60. Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1975), 219–29, together with the remarks of Beck, in *BZ*, 69 (1976), 184.

The careful distinction made between the various titles in the captions accompanying the miniature figures should suffice, in my view, to convince us that John VIII was already crowned coemperor with his father before 1408, especially since John is represented wearing the same type of crown and the same deep purple garment with *loros* and is probably holding the same cruciform scepter as Manuel II, while his brothers' garments and insignia are completely different.³² One may even suppose that the miniature was made some years before 1408, probably before the birth on 8 February 1405 of Constantine (XI),³³ Manuel's fourth son, since this prince does not appear in the family portrait; and one may date implicitly John VIII's coronation before 1405. But this is an argument *ex silentio*, admittedly weak; and, in any case, a more precise dating of the miniature is not important for our purposes. It will suffice to say that John VIII was a crowned coemperor—in any case, he was certainly represented in official works of art as such—before the year 1408³⁴ and possibly before 1405, and to add that the study of our pyxis provides one more clue for the dating of his elevation to imperial rank. As to the "coronation" of 1421—if it was a coronation—one may suppose that it concerned John VIII's accession to the rank of *autokrator*,

³² Cf. the color reproduction of the miniature, in Sp. Lampros, *Λεύκωμα Βυζαντινῶν Αὐτοκρατόρων* (Athens, 1930), pl. 84.

³³ Barker, *op. cit.*, 494–96.

³⁴ A. Christophilopoulou, 'Εκλογή, ἀναγόρευσις καὶ στέφισ τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ αὐτοκράτορος (Athens, 1957), 203, has correctly interpreted the miniature and considered that it proves that John VIII was crowned before 1408; in spite of the evidence, her position has been dismissed by Barker (*op. cit.*, 350 note 97), with the very unlikely argument that John's representation in imperial garments was "perhaps a mere acknowledgement of the obvious fact that he was the heir apparent." There is no way of establishing a terminus post quem for John's coronation, and I think that notes like the one written by John Chortasmenos in cod. Vat. gr. 742 (Constantinople, 5 September 1402, αὐτοκράτορες Manuel [II] Palaeologus and John [VII] Palaeologus) are of little avail, since one may suppose that Chortasmenos mentioned only the αὐτοκράτορες (and not the simple *basileis*) of his time. See *Codices Vaticani Graeci*, III, ed. R. Devreesse (Vatican City, 1950), 257.

as has already been suggested by Christophilopoulou.³⁵

From the above historical analysis one may conclude that the only period in Byzantine history to which the prosopographical indications given by our pyxis relate is roughly the period between December 1399 and September 1408: two emperors reigning jointly (John VII and his considerably older uncle Manuel II), whose wives are alive (Irene and Helen), and whose sons are coemperors with their fathers (Andronicus V and John VIII). And there is no reason I know of that might oppose the above identifications. The faces of the emperors on the pyxis are quite small—no head is bigger than 7 mm., crown and beard included—and are not preserved in perfect condition; it would thus be in vain to try to recognize their personal characteristics and compare them with other known likenesses, such as the ones listed below:

1. Our pyxis preserves the only contemporary representation of John VII; we know of two sketches of this emperor, both dating from the fifteenth century and both made certainly long after his death. One is found on folio 299 of cod. a. S.5.5 of the Biblioteca Estense of Modena³⁶ (fig. 3a); the second, usually misattributed, appears on folio 2 of cod. gr. 1783 of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris³⁷ (fig. 3b). 2. There are no other known portraits of Andronicus V and his mother, the Empress Irene. 3. We know of several portraits of Manuel II, some contemporary and some made after his death: the portrait in the miniature on folio VI of cod. suppl. gr. 309 of the Bibliothèque Nationale (contemporary);³⁸ the portrait in the Louvre manuscript (*supra*, p. 333, and fig. 2) (contemporary), in which Manuel seems

to have a forked beard similar to the one on our pyxis; two sketches (again with forked beard) made after his death and preserved in the two manuscripts in which we found the representations of John VII (figs. 3a–b); etc.³⁹ 4. The only other portraits of John VIII as a child and of his mother Helen are also to be found in the Louvre manuscript. These comparative examples do not oppose my identifications of the emperors represented on the pyxis.

One may then suggest a more precise date for its carving. Of the two sons, John VIII is represented as being considerably older than Andronicus V, who died at the age of seven not long after he arrived in the city in which his father reigned. Was this city Constantinople (John VII arrived in December 1399) or Thessalonica (1403/4)? The difference in age between Andronicus V and John VIII shown on the pyxis suggests Thessalonica. For John VIII, born at the earliest in December 1392, could not have been more than seven years old in December 1399; there would be no reason for him to be represented at that time as older than Andronicus V, especially since we know that John VIII was a rather small child: Clavijo, who met him in 1403 when he was eleven, thought that he was only eight.⁴⁰

In light of the above, we may now look more closely at some events of 1403. I have said that soon after Manuel's return to Constantinople and the peaceful transfer of power a quarrel developed between him and his nephew. John VII was sent to Lemnos in apparent disgrace. From there he crossed over to Lesbos, and in September 1403, together with his father-in-law, the lord of Lesbos Francesco II Gattilusi, he launched a naval expedition against Thessalonica—with no tangible result. But soon afterward the two Byzantine emperors were reconciled once again, on the basis of a compromise which may well indicate the reasons for their quarrel and which is reported by a contemporary, Clavijo: Manuel II and John VII would both remain full emperors; after Manuel's death,

³⁵ Barker, *op. cit.*, 534–39, gives a list of the presumed portraits of Manuel II.

⁴⁰ Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlán*, ed. F. López Estrada (Madrid, 1943), 34–35.

³⁵ Christophilopoulou, *op. cit.*, 203–4. Cf. B. Ferjančić, in *ZVI*, 10 (1967), 260 and note 39.

³⁶ Lampros, *Λεύκωμα*, pl. 91; Barker, *op. cit.*, fig. 29, pp. 531–32.

³⁷ Lampros, *Λεύκωμα*, pl. 86; Barker, *op. cit.*, fig. 32 and p. 532. Barker thinks that the Emperor John represented to the right of Manuel II is his father, John V. But a comparison of this sketch with those of John V and John VII in the Modena manuscript (see *supra*, note 36) reveals that it can fit only John VII, who died relatively young in 1408.

³⁸ Lampros, *Λεύκωμα*, pl. 85; Barker, *op. cit.*, frontispiece and pp. 533–34.

John VII would reign alone; after his death, he would be succeeded by Manuel's son, presumably John VIII; and the latter would in his turn be succeeded by John VII's son, presumably Andronicus V. Clavijo states clearly that in his judgment this arrangement would not be respected by either party: "lo qual tengo que lo non guardarán el uno al otro."⁴¹ This is just Clavijo's personal opinion, but it is characteristic of the atmosphere of suspicion that prevailed at the very moment when the arrangements about the succession to the throne were reached by means of discussions, quarrels, and military threats.

The text of Clavijo,⁴² combined with the synchronism of the four emperors provided by our pyxis, seems to indicate that by the end of 1403 John VIII as well as Andronicus V were crowned coemperors—thus their hereditary rights to the throne were confirmed.

Thessalonica was regained from the Turks by Demetrius Leontares, Manuel's trusted friend, who turned it over to John VII after the reconciliation of the two emperors in 1403.⁴³ We also know that this was a condition for the reconciliation, and that detailed arrangements had been made concerning the relations between the two emperors in a written oath, a ὄρκομωτικόν, which is not preserved, though some clauses of it are mentioned in a document of September 1405 issued by Manuel II. We learn that a well-defined frontier was traced between the empires of Constantinople and of Thessalonica (τὸ σύνορον τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης); that part of the territories recovered from the Turks,

including Mt. Athos, were now attached to Constantinople; and that the Empire of Thessalonica, together with its taxes, was "given" to John VII by Manuel II, who thus appears to have some kind of superiority over his nephew, whom he calls his (adopted) son.⁴⁴ This fits quite well with what Clavijo tells us of the agreement of 1403.

Let us now try to see what the meaning of the whole scene might be. I suggest that the model of the city offered to the emperors represents Thessalonica,⁴⁵ and that the whole scene is a symbolic representation of the festivities that took place for the reception of John VII as the emperor who was going to reside and rule there. This is why the city is offered to John VII, while Manuel II, the principal emperor, is left somehow in the background.

We must remember that the arrival of John VII in Thessalonica in 1403–4 had a meaning that went well beyond the simple reception of a new emperor: by concluding the treaty of 1403, John had, in fact, liberated the city from the Turkish yoke; and by settling in it, he turned it once again into the second city of the Byzantine Empire. The inhabitants of Thessalonica were all too conscious of this; the synodicon of the city contains an exceptionally long and laudatory paragraph on John VII: "John Palaeologus, our . . . emperor . . . who fought valiantly and persistently for the Roman state, at a time when it was almost subdued by the foreigners; who did not at all flinch, when a most violent storm threatened to inundate everything;

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 56. This arrangement seems to be along the same lines as the one proposed by Manuel some ten years earlier and rejected by John VII. See D. Loenertz, "Une erreur singulière de Laonic Chalcocandyle: le prétendu second mariage de Jean V Paléologue," *REB*, 15 (1957), 183–84; repr. in R. J. Loenertz, *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca* (Rome, 1970), 391–92.

⁴² Cf. the cautious assessment of this text by Dennis, "An Unknown Byzantine Emperor," 178–79.

⁴³ *Ducæ Historia Turcobyzantina*, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest, 1958), 113. A document of April 1421 asserts that Thessalonica had reverted to the Byzantines "since seventeen years," which brings us into the Byzantine year 1403/4 (from September to August): F. Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges* (Munich, 1948), no. 102, lines 53–54.

⁴⁴ For the document of 1405, see Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς, 2 (1918), 450–51; cf. F. Dölger and P. Wirth, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des ost-römischen Reiches*, V (Munich-Berlin, 1965), no. 3301. For the adoption, see *supra*, note 11.

⁴⁵ As Weitzmann, *Catalogue*, III (note 1 *supra*), 79, has noted, this is a very simplified model of the city—and understandably so, taking into consideration the scale of the whole representation—and one cannot really expect any characteristic features that would relate it to any particular city. I compared it to a much larger model of Thessalonica represented in a Vatopedi ivory and dated to the twelfth century (A. Grabar, "Quelques reliquaires de saint Démétrios et le martyrium du saint à Salonique," *DOP*, 5 [1950], 3–5). While there are both similarities and differences, there is nothing forbidding the identification of our model of the city as Thessalonica.

who, like a good captain, salvaged the power of the Romans and recovered from the Barbarians many cities, the first and greatest of which is our Thessalonica, that saw the light of liberty after a long slavery—God, ceding to the emperor's endeavors and fervor and to the intercession of our patron, the great martyr Demetrius, granted us deliverance from slavery; moreover, John has settled in our city and, without neglecting anything, has done everything necessary to assure our safety...."⁴⁶

The arrival of an emperor in a city has always been considered a major event normally accompanied by public festivities. A text of Pseudo-Athanasius vividly describes this scene: συγκινούνται μὲν δῆμοι, σκιρτῶσι δὲ παῖδες, χορεύουσι κόραι . . . καὶ χωρεῖ διὰ πάντων ἡ τῆς βασιλικῆς παρουσίας πανήγυρις.⁴⁷ These festivities were even more spectacular if a new and popular emperor entered a city in order to assume power therein, as was the case in 963 when Nicephorus Phocas entered Constantinople. The people went out to meet him and then escorted him μετ' εὐφημιῶν καὶ κρότων καὶ σαλπύγγων καὶ κυμβάλων to the Great

Church.⁴⁸ This scene is depicted in a miniature of the famous Scylitzes Matritensis (fig. 3c).⁴⁹

I understand the composition on our pyxis to represent the new emperor being welcomed by the people in the city over which he is going to rule. It is obvious that the entire scene is conceived by our artist in a much more symbolic way: the emperors do not *walk* into the city; they *stand* in ceremonial fashion and accept the model of the city. There is no crowd represented to acclaim them. The symbolic character of the whole scene is stressed through the presence of a great variety of musicians and female dancers, a variety that brings to mind the famous Psalm 150 of David.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:
praise him with the psaltery and harp.
Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
praise him with stringed instruments
and organs.
Praise him upon the loud cymbals:
praise him upon the high sounding
cymbals.
Let every thing that hath breath praise
the Lord.

Most of the instruments mentioned in these lines are represented on our frieze, as they are also in miniatures made to illustrate this Psalm.⁵⁰ I suspect that the illustration of this very well-known Psalm may have been somewhere in the back of the artist's mind

⁴⁶ J. Gouillard, "Le synodicon de l'orthodoxie: Edition et commentaire," *TM*, 2 (1967), 99: Ἰωάννου τοῦ . . . βασιλέως ἡμῶν τοῦ Παλαιολόγου . . . στερεῶς δὲ καὶ γενναίως ὑπὲρ τῶν ῥωμαϊκῶν ἀγωνισαμένου πραγμάτων εἰς γόνυ σχεδὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀλλοφύλων κλινάντων, καὶ σφοδροτάτου μὴδ' ὅσον εἰπεῖν τοῦ κλύδωνος ἀνεγερθέντος καὶ κατακλύσειν ἅπαντα ἀπειλοῦντος, τοῦ δὲ μὴδὲν ὑπενδόντος, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς κυβερνήτας τὴν τε ἀρχὴν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ἀνασώσασαμένου καὶ πόλεις οὐκ ὀλίγας τῆς τῶν βαρβάρων χειρὸς ἐξελόντος, ὧν πρώτη καὶ μεγίστη ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς αὕτη Θεσσαλονίκη ἐλεύθερον φῶς ἰδοῦσα μετὰ δουλείαν μακράν, τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῖς τοῦ βασιλέως ἀγωνίσμασι καὶ προθυμίαις καὶ τῇ τοῦ ταύτης πολιούχου μεγαλομάρτυρος Δημητρίου μεσιτείᾳ ἐπικαμφθέντος καὶ τὴν ἀπαλλαγὴν τῆς δουλείας χαρισάμενου, ἔτι τε τὴν οἴκησιν ἐν ταύτῃ ποιησαμένου καὶ μὴδενὸς τῶν δεόντων ἔλλειψός, ἀλλὰ πᾶσι τρόποις τὸ ἀσφαλὲς ἡμῖν περιποιησάμενου. . . .

⁴⁷ PG, 28, cols. 1081b–c. Cf. Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινὸν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμὸς*, II, 1 (Athens, 1948), 52–53; for an earlier period, see S. Mac Cormack, "Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity: the Ceremony of Adventus," *Historia*, 21 (1972), 721–52 (bibliography); and for Western parallels, see P. Willmes, *Der Herrscher "Adventus" im Kloster des Frühmittelalters* (Munich, 1976).

⁴⁸ *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn (Berlin-New York, 1973), 258.

⁴⁹ S. C. Estopañan, *Scyllitzes Matritensis* (Barcelona-Madrid, 1965), 153 no. 375, fol. 145^v and pl. 349. The rapprochement of this miniature with our ivory has already been made by Weitzmann, *Catalogue*, III, 80, who considers it to be a "palace orchestra," in spite of the accompanying text that the miniature is meant to illustrate.

⁵⁰ Cf., for example, a twelfth-century miniature in E. T. de Wald, *The Illustrations in the Manuscripts of the Septuagint*, III, 1, *Vaticanus graecus* 1927 (Princeton-London-The Hague, 1941), fol. 264, pl. LXIV; in this miniature a group of animals, including a conspicuous peacock, is also represented in order to illustrate the phrase "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." See also the miniatures of the Serbian Psalter, in which a group of dancers is represented: J. Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen des Serbischen Psalters* (Vienna, 1906), 66–67 and pl. XLIV.



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.



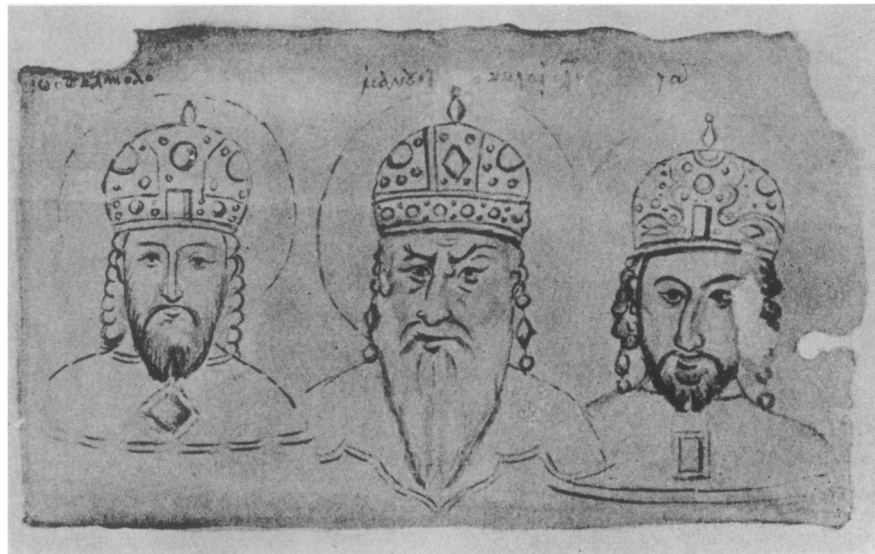
f.



2. Paris, Louvre, Ivoires, cod. A 53, fol. 2r, Manuel II Palaeologus and Family



3a. Modena, Biblioteca Estense, cod. Mutinensis a.S.5.5, fol. 299r, Andronicus IV, John VII, and Manuel II



3b. Paris, Bibl. Nat., cod. gr. 1783, fol. 2r, John VII, Manuel II, and John VIII



3c. Madrid, Bibl. Nac., Scylitzes Matritensis, fol. 145v, Nicephorus Phocas Entering Constantinople

when he conceived the composition that decorates the pyxis. What David said in relation to God was a main source of inspiration for Byzantine rhetoric.⁵¹ In the case of our pyxis, a discreet allusion to Psalm 150 could not but flatter the emperor and, moreover, constitute a symbolism for the festivities that should have taken place when John VII, the "liberator," assumed power in Thessalonica.

This brings us to the question of the meaning of the peacock represented under the model of the city. Weitzmann, as well as Grabar, prefers to consider it as purely decorative, hinting at the splendor of a palace garden. This may well be true. But with the new interpretation of the pyxis, I wonder whether the presence of this peacock does not have a more significant meaning. The peacock is represented with other birds and animals in miniatures illustrating Psalm 150,⁵² and we could suppose that its presence on the pyxis might well be a reminiscence of a prototype that inspired the artist. In addition, according to modern scholars,⁵³ the peacock was, in Early Christian times, a symbol of the immortality of the soul or of the Resurrection. While I am not in a position to assert that this tradition survived until—or was remembered in—the fifteenth century, it is hard to avoid this association, knowing that the model of the city represented above the peacock was the second city of the Byzantine Empire, lost to the Turks and then recovered thanks to the efforts of the emperor to whom its model is now offered. Further research in this direction might be of interest. For the time being, this is a hypothesis I like very

much but which might be too good to be true. After all, a simple decorative peacock is nothing exceptional, especially if it was carved in a city where everyone could see the mosaics of the Rotunda of St. George.

The lack of an inscription indicating the name of the young John VIII is not only explainable but also significant in the historical context of the year 1403/4. It fits well in the general atmosphere of bitterness and mistrust that characterized the compromise arrangement of 1403, described with much skepticism by Clavijo. This arrangement provided that John VIII would succeed John VII; but, as this would be natural and as it is attested in the Monody mentioned above (p. 332), John VII wanted to have his own son, Andronicus V, as his successor. Our pyxis, made to commemorate John VII's entry into Thessalonica, was initially conceived and carved in a way that is complimentary to John (who receives the city), but with full respect to the political rights of all reigning emperors. The lack of any inscription above John VIII seems to betray a certain intention on the part of John VII and of his partisans concerning the future succession to the throne—an intention that might create additional problems in the future of the Empire; but these problems did not materialize because of Andronicus V's and John VII's timely deaths.

What was the use of the pyxis? Many hypotheses can be made, provided they take into consideration the dimensions of the ivory. However, it is striking that a scene with clear political and ideological implications—a scene of propaganda—has been carved on an object so small that it could be seen only by members of the family that possessed it. Was it made at the instigation of some Thessalonians and offered to John VII? Is it the only survivor of a series of similar objects that were distributed to the élite of Thessalonica, presumably by John VII? Either is possible; and in both cases the size of the pyxis seems to testify to the financial difficulties that all Byzantines, including the emperors, experienced in the fifteenth century.

⁵¹ It would suffice to look at the *index locorum* of any Byzantine orator to find many instances where David's Psalms are applied to emperors, even in a context that might appear to be impious. For example, see *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et Epistulae*, ed. I. A. Van Dieten (Berlin-New York, 1972), 259–61. In one instance (*ibid.*, 67) Choniates addresses the emperor in these words: Οὕτως, ἰσόθεις βασιλεῦ, ἐμεγαλύνθη τὰ ἔργα σου, οὕτως ἐν σοφίᾳ πάντα ἐποίησας (Ps. 103:24).

⁵² Cf. *supra*, note 50.

⁵³ See the article "paon" by H. Leclercq, in *DACL*, XIII,1 (1936), cols. 1075–97.